



## Seneca County Commissioners

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111 Madison St.  
Tiffin, Ohio 44883

February 11, 2021

Dear Senate President Matt Huffman and House Speaker Robert Cupp,

The Seneca County Board of Commissioners is sending this letter to inform you of its steadfast support of Ohio Senate Bill 52, which is an updated version of Ohio House Bill 401 from the 132<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly. As proposed, the legislation which is sometimes referred to as the “Reineke Referendum,” does an excellent job of ensuring that the voices of our citizens are heard on the fate of solar and wind projects of significant scale and consequence. It accomplishes this by allowing a vote or referendum on these projects early in the development phase. When we first began to learn about the process for approval of these major projects, we were surprised that there was no mechanism for direct zoning authority offered to local governments or, most importantly, to citizens who live near the footprint of these proposed projects.

The issue of the development of utility-scale industrial wind turbine projects has been a hot-button issue for our community for several years. There have been countless debates on the merits of these projects, and although we have witnessed many disagreements between elected officials, local residents and wind developers; one common theme has emerged: there is a troubling lack of local control afforded to those who could be impacted the most.

Under current law, unelected bureaucrats in Columbus who serve on the Ohio Power Siting Board are given the ultimate decision-making power through a process that we believe unfairly minimizes the voices of the people of our local communities. Part of our job is to do our best to represent those who call our community home. We believe legislation like SB 52 is a good step in accomplishing that task. Throughout this process, over several different boards of commissioners, we have struggled to find a way to empower the many voices of those who opposed or supported industrial wind turbine projects in their neighborhoods. We believe the current OPSB process has minimized the voices of many within our community, consequently making it so our citizens have no true control over an issue that could lead to significant ramifications for them and their families. With Ohio Senate Bill 52, we move positively toward governing of the people, by the people and for the people.

No matter the outcome of a petition and referendum, we know we can proudly say that the will of the people has been made known and that we are truly considering the voices of our constituents.

The bill is primarily sponsored by District 26 Senator Bill Reineke and District 1 Senator Rob McColley. We would like to express our wholehearted appreciation to those two and to all who have fought to present something that gives more power to the voices of the people. We must also state our great appreciation for groups of citizens who have come forward to make their opinions known. They have all reminded us what is great about our country ... the right to free speech and to participate in government. We strongly urge you and your colleagues to consider the approval of this legislation, as we believe in Seneca County that it is paramount that we represent the will of our constituents.